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CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1 1. A device for collecting ratings on a plurality of
2 subjects, said device comprising:
3 a processor;
4 a memory connected to said processor;
5 an input device connected to said processor;
6 an output device connected to said processor; and
7 a short-range transceiver connected to said
8 processor, said processor, said memory, said input
9 device, said output device, and said transceiver being
10 contained within a case configured for portability; said
11 processor being configured for receiving, from said input
12 device, a first set of ratings for ones of a plurality of
13 subjects, receiving, through said transceiver, a second
14 set of ratings for ones of said plurality, and updating
15 ones of said first set of ratings by merging with
16 corresponding ones of said second set of ratings.

1 2. The device of Claim 1, wherein said transceiver uses
2 Bluetooth technology.

1 3. The device of Claim 1, wherein said transceiver uses
2 WiFi technology.

1 4. The device of Claim 1, further comprising receiving,
2 from said input device, a first set of indications of
3 interest regarding additional ones of said plurality of
4 subjects, whereby receipt of ratings is triggered for

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5 said additional ones of said plurality of subjects by
6 said first set of indications of interest.

1 5. The device of Claim 1, wherein said processor is
2 configured to update ones of said first set of ratings by
3 calculating, for each item updated, a new weighted rating
4 based on an existing weighted rating from said first set
5 of ratings, an existing weighted rating from said second
6 set of ratings, and a similarity factor between said
7 first set of ratings and said second set of ratings.

1 6. The device of Claim 1, wherein said processor is
2 configured to update ones of said first set of ratings by
3 calculating, for each item updated, a new weighted rating
4 based on an existing weighted rating from said first set
5 of ratings, an existing individual rating from said
6 second set of ratings, and a similarity factor between
7 said first set of ratings and said second set of ratings.

1 7. The device of Claim 1, wherein said processor is
2 configured to update ones of said first set of ratings by
3 merging, for each item, a second semantic tree from said
4 second set of ratings into a first semantic tree from
5 said first set of ratings, then calculating a new
6 weighted rating based on said first semantic tree.

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1 8. The device of Claim 1, wherein said processor is
2 configured to add comments from said second set of
3 ratings into said first set of ratings.

1 9. The device of Claim 1, wherein said device is from
2 the group consisting of a personal digital assistant, a
3 laptop computer, and a cellular phone.

1 10. A method of collecting ratings on a plurality of
2 subjects, said method comprising the steps of:
3 storing, on a portable computing device, a first set
4 of ratings for ones of a plurality of subjects and a
5 first set of indications of interest regarding additional
6 ones of said plurality of subjects;
7 encountering, through a short-range transmission
8 device, a user having a second set of ratings for ones of
9 said plurality of subjects;
10 receiving, through said short-range transmission
11 device, ones of said second set of ratings; and
12 updating ones of said first set of ratings and ones
13 of said first set of indications of interest by merging
14 with corresponding ones of said second set of ratings.

1 11. The method of Claim 10, wherein
2 said storing step further comprising storing a
3 policy to guide which sets of ratings are accepted and
4 said receiving step or said merging step is
5 performed dependent on said policy being met.

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1 12. The method of Claim 10, wherein said merging step is
2 performed dependent on said second set of ratings having
3 a similarity of at least a given level to said first set
4 of ratings.

1 13. The method of Claim 10, further comprising the step
2 of broadcasting a request for ratings.

1 14. The method of Claim 10, further comprising the step
2 of responding to a broadcast of a request for ratings.

1 15. The method of Claim 10, wherein said merging step
2 comprises receiving a plurality of individual responses
3 for each of ones of said plurality of subjects and
4 storing said plurality of individual responses in a
5 semantic tree network for said subject.

1 16. The method of Claim 15, wherein a rating for one of
2 said plurality of subjects is calculated by summing all
3 collected responses in a semantic tree network for said
4 one of said plurality of subjects.

1 17. The method of Claim 10, wherein said merging step
2 comprises calculating a rating by summing a first rating
3 of said first set of ratings and a corresponding second
4 rating of said second set of ratings, using a weighting
5 factor.

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1 18. The method of Claim 10, wherein said short-range
2 transmission device utilizes Bluetooth technology.

1 19. A computer program product stored on a computer
2 readable medium, said computer program product
3 comprising:

4 first instructions for storing, on a portable
5 computing device, a first set of ratings for ones of a
6 plurality of subjects and a first set of indications of
7 interest regarding additional ones of said plurality of
8 subjects;

9 second instructions for recognizing, through a
10 short-range transmission/reception device, a user having
11 a second set of ratings for ones of said plurality of
12 subjects;

13 third instructions for receiving, through said
14 short-range transmission device, ones of said second set
15 of ratings; and

16 fourth instructions for updating ones of said first
17 set of ratings and ones of said first set of indications
18 of interest by merging with corresponding ones of said
19 second set of ratings.

1 20. The computer program product of Claim 19, wherein
2 said first instructions further comprise storing a
3 policy to guide which sets of ratings are accepted and
4 said third instructions or said fourth instructions
5 are performed dependent on said policy being met.

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1 21. The computer program product of Claim 19, wherein
2 said fourth instructions are performed dependent on said
3 second set of ratings having a similarity of at least a
4 given level to said first set of ratings.

1 22. The computer program product of Claim 19, further
2 comprising fifth instructions for broadcasting a request
3 for ratings.

1 23. The computer program product of Claim 19, further
2 comprising fifth instructions for responding to a
3 broadcast of a request for ratings.

1 24. The computer program product of Claim 19, wherein
2 said fourth instructions comprise receiving a plurality
3 of individual responses for each of ones of said
4 plurality of subjects and storing said plurality of
5 individual responses in a semantic tree network for said
6 subject.

1 25. The computer program product of Claim 24, wherein a
2 rating for one of said plurality of subjects is
3 calculated by summing all collected responses in a
4 semantic tree network for said one of said plurality of
5 subjects.

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- 1 26. The computer program product of Claim 19, wherein
- 2 said fourth instructions comprise calculating a rating by
- 3 summing a first rating of said first set of ratings and a
- 4 corresponding second rating of said second set of
- 5 ratings, using a weighting factor.